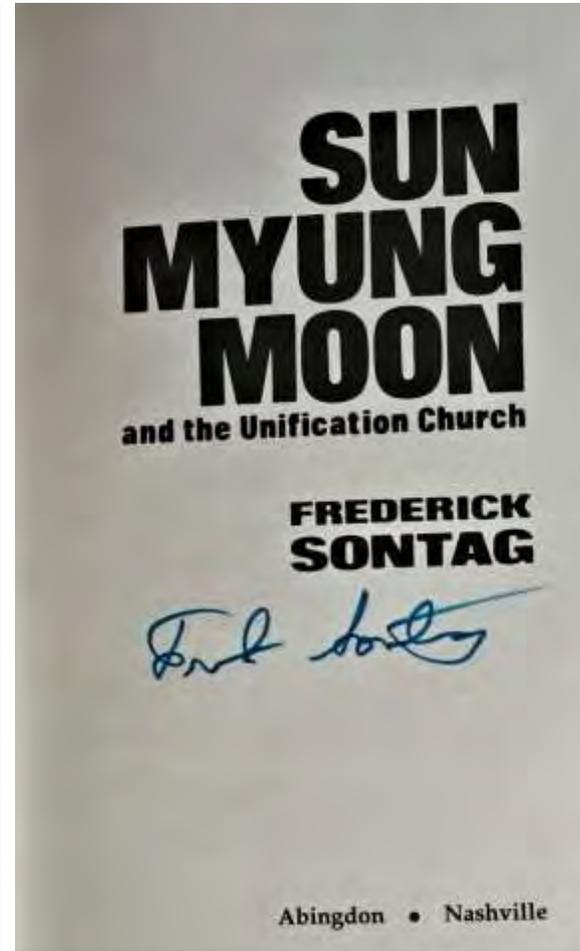
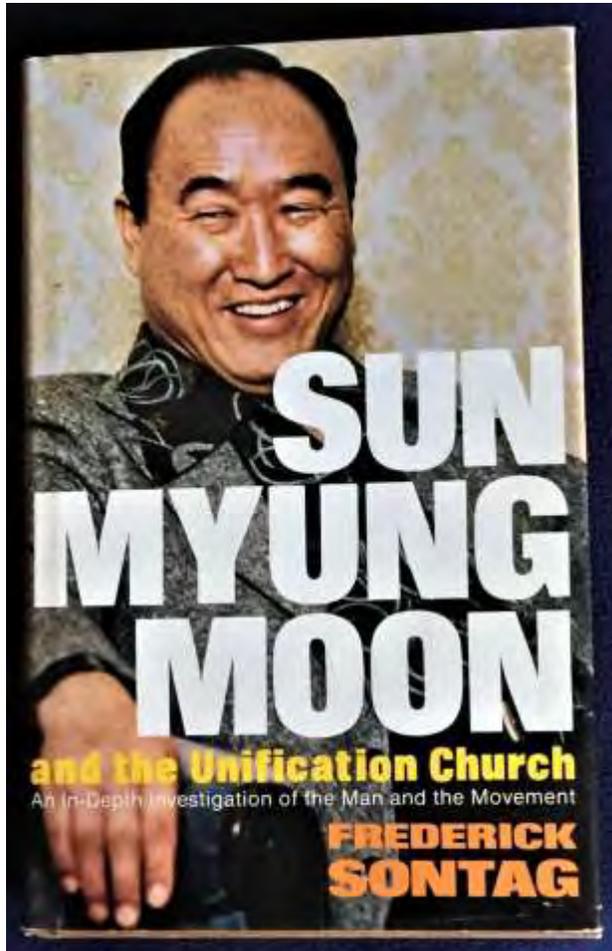


At Last an Honest and New Approach to Evaluating the Unification Church

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Sun Myung Moon and the Unification Church, by Frederick Sontag, Abingdon Press, Nashville, Tennessee

This book, just released is undoubtedly the most balanced study of the Unification Church to appear so far in the United States. Dr. Sontag's study is a personal account of his observations about our movement, beginning with his first exposure at the Fourth International Conference on the Unity of the Sciences, continuing through his travels to Church centers in Europe, Asia, and the United States and including his attempt (unsuccessful) to visit the deprogrammers' "Freedom of Thought Institute." Also included in the book is a summary of the Divine Principle, excerpts from Reverend Moon's speeches, replies to allegations against the Church, and a thirty-page interview with Reverend Moon.

Parts of particular interest to Church members are excerpts of interviews with members around the world and the interview with Reverend Moon. Topics discussed in the interview were: the role of new revelations from God, the significance of the Yankee Stadium and Washington Monument rallies, the part of the United States in God's providence and Reverend Moon's opinion of the controversy swirling around the Church.

Readers should keep in mind that the book is a survey rather than a critique or evaluation of the Unification Church. Dr. Sontag's conclusions about the Unification Church are only two: "The origins of the movement are genuinely humble, religious and spiritual; the adaptability and solidarity of the movement are such that we are dealing with a movement here to stay. We have witnessed in our own lifetime the birth, growing pains -- and will see the maturity -- of a new religious movement."

The real value of this book is that it asks the right questions. Dr. Sontag wisely deflects the reader's criticism from the Church to his own life and American society. In doing so, Dr. Sontag demonstrates a recognition that much of the public opinion about our church is more a projection of what is going on in American society than it is a reflection of our movement. Dr. Sontag states in his introduction: "It would be no small service if this book could put the hard questions on the right plane and in their most illuminating form..." He goes on to give an accurate summary as he is introducing the Church: "What is fascinating about the movement is that the problems of the day are mirrored in it, whether social, religious, political, or psychological."

Evaluate the Unification Church movement adequately and you have understood our era. This church raises the issues of the deterioration of our family structure, the lethargy of many traditional religious institutions, the problem of religions intruding their goals into politics, and the religious control of money and power. At the center of it all lies the question of Jesus and his mission, plus the perplexing issue of how God acts and whether he gives new revelation in a new day."

Sun Myung Moon and the Unification Church is being heavily promoted by its publisher, which is affiliated with the Methodist Church. An advertisement for it compromised the cover of a recent issue of Publishers' Weekly magazine; Dr. Sontag will also be touring the country.

This book is a valuable and welcome addition to the existing literature about the Unification Church. Hopefully, it will be the beginning of other similar serious studies.